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Israeli Statement on Pollard Spy Case Questioned

U.S. Officials Cite Evidence of High-Level Involvement in Espionage Operation

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From the moment Jonathan Jay Pollard was arrested last Nov. 21 outside the Israeli Embassy here, a central question has been whether Pollard's spying was authorized by the Israeli government or was a "renegade" operation that functioned without the knowledge of top Israeli leaders.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The government of Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres has steadfastly maintained that the Pollard case was a "deviation" from Israel's longstanding policy of not spying on the United States and that the operation functioned without the knowledge of Peres or other top Israeli leaders.

However, U.S. law enforcement officials familiar with the Pollard investigation said this week that evidence developed in the case raises serious questions about the credibility of the official Israel position.

"It was supposed to be a 10-year operation for \$300,000. How can anything this big and involving this much money not be authorized?" one official said yesterday. "The raw data on the record suggests very strongly that the operation had higher authority."

The extensive nature of the Pollard operation—as outlined by federal prosecutors in U.S. District Court Wednesday when Pollard pleaded guilty to spying for Israel—has fueled the claim that the Peres government knows more than it has admitted.

Pollard's Israeli contacts paid him more than \$45,000 and deposited an additional \$30,000 in a Swiss bank account opened for him that was to be replenished every year for 10 years, prosecutors said, as well as obtaining an Israeli passport in a fake name for him.

However, other Reagan administration officials involved in the diplomatic aspects of the case argue that the official Israeli version of

the Pollard affair has not been discredited and the evidence presented by the prosecutors does not prove that the Pollard operation was authorized.

"Where is the evidence that the Israeli government knew about it?" asked one U.S. official. He said officials who conclude that the operation was authorized by the Israeli government rely on "intuitive premises."

Israeli sources also stressed yesterday that the State Department is satisfied with Israel's explanation of the events and the extent of its co-operation.

A senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official in Jerusalem yesterday blamed speculation that the Pollard operation was officially sanctioned on U.S. Justice Department officials.

"The Pollard case is clear as far as the [Reagan] administration is concerned—it is an aberration that has been rectified," the Israeli official said. "A few details here and there don't change the picture."

Among the details from the evidence outlined in prosecutors' court papers, which are cited by U.S. officials who challenge the official Israeli position:

■ Besides the four Israelis named as unindicted co-conspirators in the Pollard indictment, prosecutors said several other unidentified people were present on numerous occasions when Pollard delivered secret U.S. documents to his contacts, often copying the material he supplied. This suggests a broader operation than a small "rogue" network.

In addition, one of his contacts, a former secretary in the Israeli Embassy here, also had access to another apartment in her building that had been equipped with "sophisticated copying and photographic equipment" set up for Pollard.

■ Three days after Pollard was confronted by the FBI, he telephoned the Israeli Embassy's security officer, recited the names of his "handlers" and asked for political

asylum. When he called back the next day, the same security officer instructed him to come to the embassy if he could "shake" his surveillance. The question asked by those who suspect official approval of the Pollard operation is why the embassy security officer would appear to cooperate with Pollard.

■ Pollard's Israeli contacts financed two overseas trips, including a visit to Israel, for Pollard; paid him \$10,000 on both occasions for his expenses; set up the Swiss bank account, and paid him \$1,500 a month and later raised the amount to \$2,500 a month.

U.S. law enforcement officials also said that Raphael (Rafi) Eitan, the Israeli official who allegedly directed the operation, and other Israelis interviewed by U.S. investigators last year in Israel did not disclose key aspects of the case, including the involvement of Pollard's initial contact, an Israeli Air Force colonel named Aviem (Avi) Sella, or the opening of the Swiss bank account.

"When [U.S. investigators] went to Israel we heard a story. The question is whether we got the truth. Quite frankly we didn't," said one U.S. official.

The full extent of the operation emerged only after Pollard began cooperating as part of his effort to negotiate a plea, U.S. officials said.

U.S. officials said that Pollard, a former civilian Navy counterintelligence analyst whose top secret clearance gave him access to a wide array of defense secrets, received regular "tasking" requests for specific classified U.S. data, from his Israeli handlers, who kept a list back in Israel of the reams of documents Pollard provided.

One of Pollard's contacts, Joseph (Yossi) Yagur, a former Israeli scientific consul in New York, told Pollard of specific instances where data he supplied had been "utilized by various branches of the Israeli military," prosecutors said.

In apologizing to the United States for the Pollard affair last year, Prime Minister Peres pledged that Israel would uncover "all the facts . . . no matter where the trail may lead" and that "those responsible will be brought to account."

However, U.S. officials noted that after the role of Eitan, the alleged leader of the Pollard operation, became known, he was appointed chairman of the board of a government-owned chemical company.

"Do you promote a 'rogue?'" asked one U.S. official. "No. You reward a team player."

Correspondent William Claiborne contributed to this report from Jerusalem.
